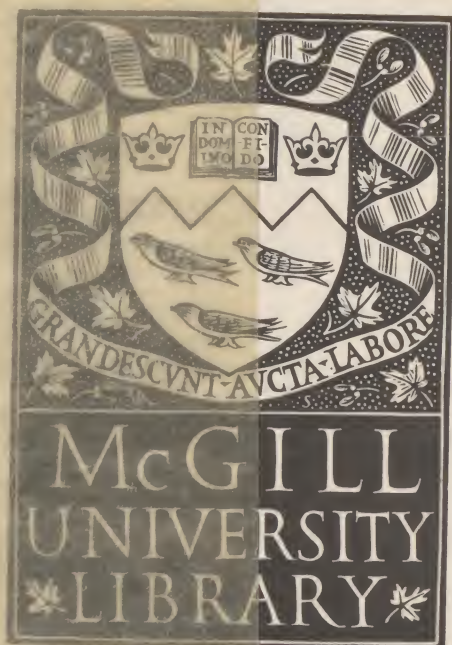
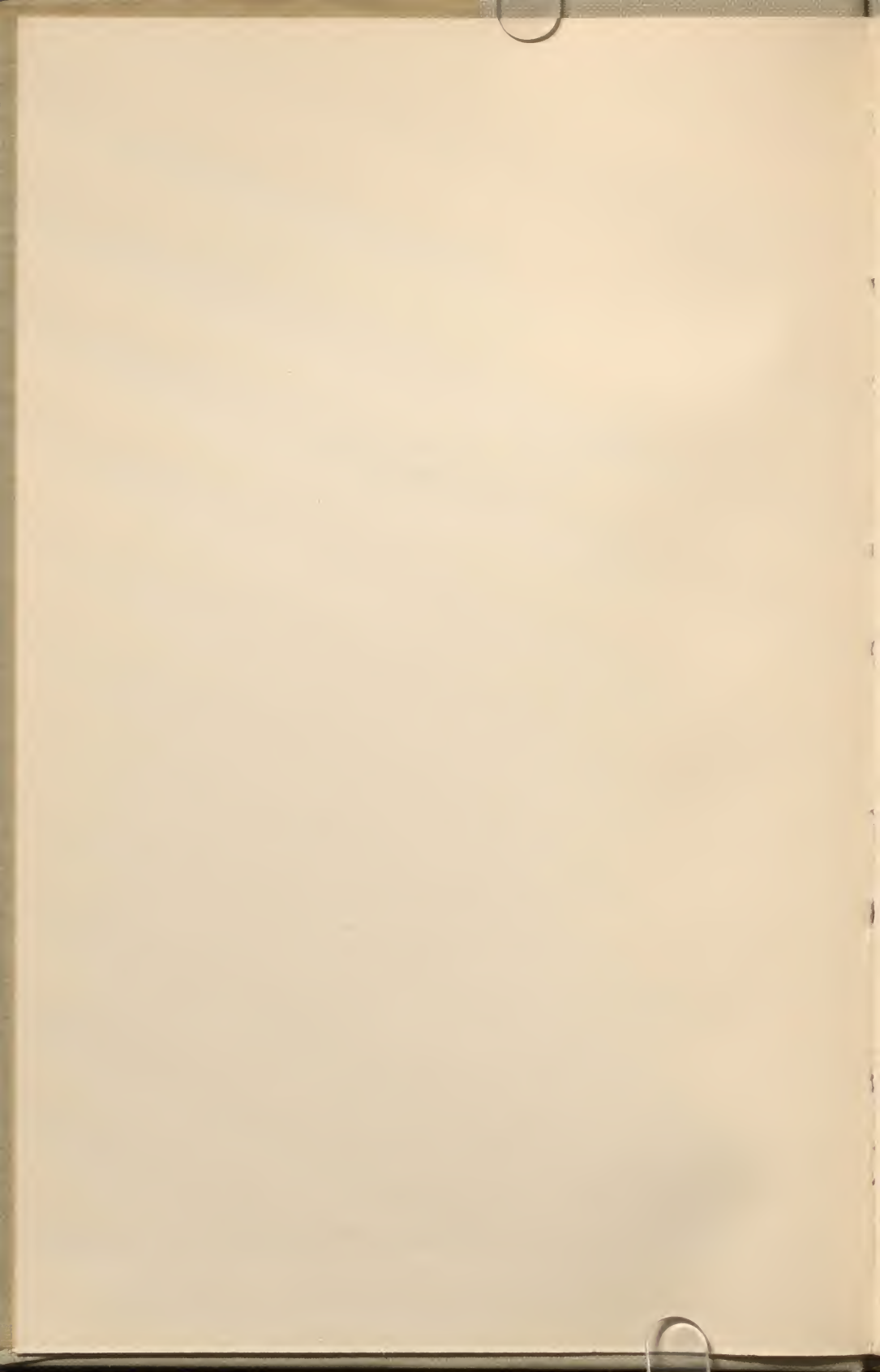


Unseen
Blossoms



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UNSEEN BLOSSOMS

And Other Poems

BY

HENRIETTA CLARKE



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Affectionately dedicated to D.W.C.

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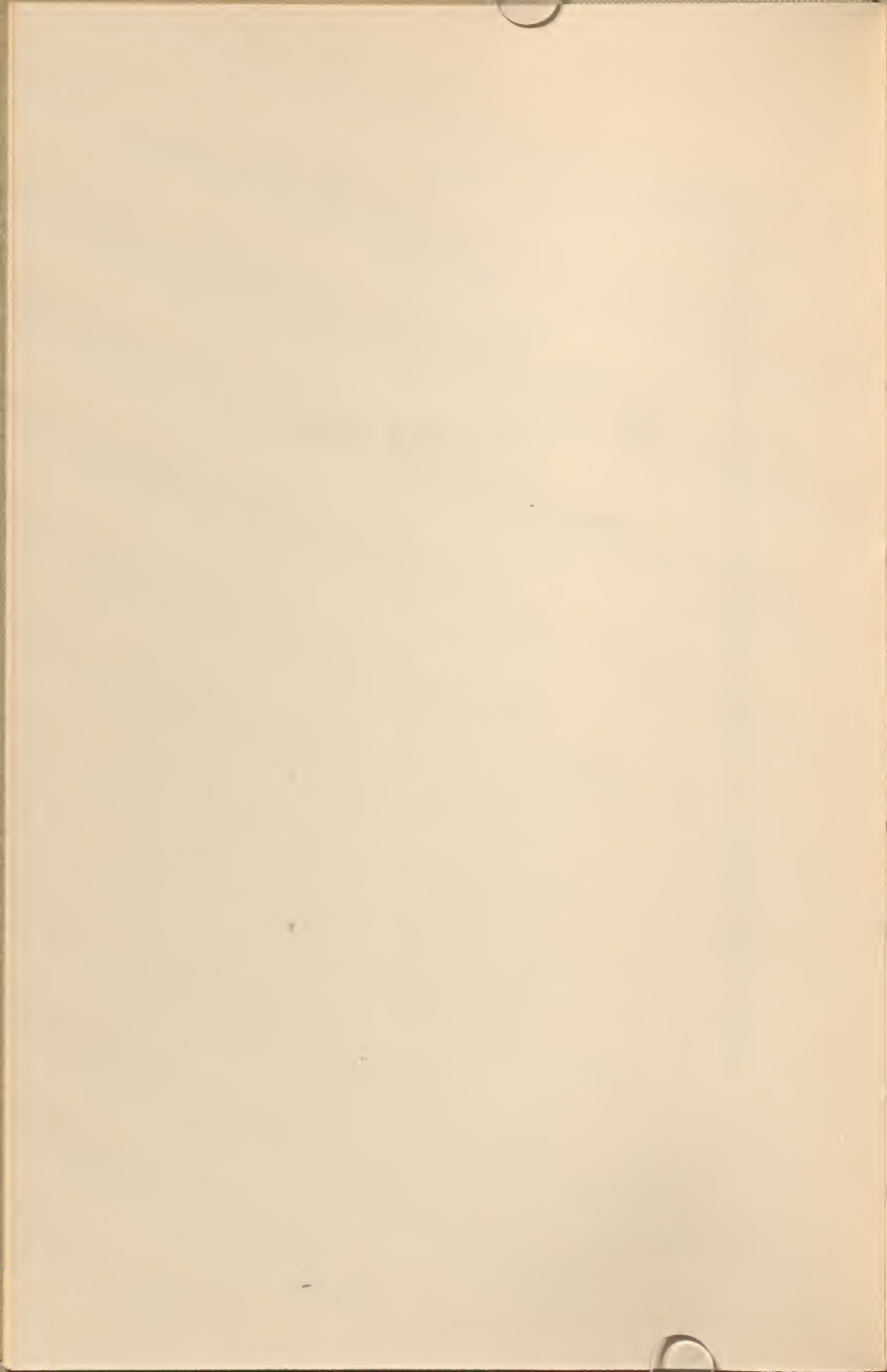
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I OF THE SEA



Little Towns

On gay mornings, foreign craft
Bring to the port their load
And the claque of wooden sabots sounds
Along the cobbled road.
Strange scents, strange tongues
Bring joy and mystery. . . .
Little towns are never lonely
If they're by the sea.

On grey mornings, old men sit
And rub tobacco in hardened hand.
While telling tales of long ago,
They look away from the land;
The youth of the village listen well
As they think of days to be. . . .
Little towns are never lonely
If they're by the sea.

Evening sunsets, afterglow,
Long grey shadows creep,
As yellow sails of anchored fleet
Are molten gold in the deep;
And figures of lovers are patterned
And blended against the sky,
In the cool of evening scudding home,
The native sea-birds fly.

Ah, hear the patter of children's feet
As they run the docks so free. . . .
Little towns are never lonely
If they're by the sea.

Adolescence

The lad was watching the sea.
Long combers blue and green,
Gilded by the sun,
Advanced and receded;
One moment white foam filled
Rocky crevices, then
An outward swirl left them
Grey, barren and unsatisfied;
Adolescent yearning obsessed him.
On the shore he heard
The swish and crash of the waves
And further out a deep drone
Followed by a sonorous murmur;
The booming undertow left on the shore
Slimy bunches of yellow weed and purple kelp;
The boy's unfathomed thoughts fared out
Beyond the distant breakers.

A Square Peg

And she said once more, "You cannot go."
Then he turned his face away
From beyond the rocks and the blue-green sea,
Where a full-rigged vessel lay.

At the farm the house was neat and trim
With an orchard blooming near;
But to-day the whole place seemed to him
As if filled with drastic fear,

With a fear no more to take his place
At the wheel of outbound ships,
Or to know the breeze with stinging tang
As toward the lea she dips.

When he dug the earth the clods were waves,
In the sky, he saw a sail,
And he thought the hoe that burned his hands
Was a tiller through a gale.

In the early dawn he crept away,
She was left in her spoolwood bed;
And mile by mile, up hill, down dale,
He ran where the pathways led.

He signed on at once for foreign ports,
But had she agreed with fate . . .
Then the sea that now between them rolls
Would not be unmeasured hate.

Welcome

To-day is the day the ships come in,
From the fishing banks of the sea,
Shall I meet my love in the blustering wind
'Mid the sounds and scents of the quay?

Or would he rather I stayed at home
In a manner circumspect,
And keep ablaze the hearthstone fire,
Just what will he expect?

I think I'll stay, I think I'll go,
There seem to be two of me,
And the neighbors will talk and gossip so
Whichever way it be.

But look, a sail, they round the buoy,
A high wind's blowing free,
I snatch my shawl, I'm out of doors,
There's only one of me.

One whose feet can't run too fast
To greet my true love, home at last.

Moored

She tugs her cables taut and strong
As the wind blows out to sea,
On high the sea-gulls screaming whirl
And strengthen her wish to be free.

She feels with pain the urge to sail
Far off from the town of her birth,
As day by day she creaks and strains
And longs for the ends of earth.

Quite near the quay an office stands
Where a man with sea-blue eyes
Is watching the gulls in their noisy flight,
A flurry of wings on the skies.

He is sick of the sight of chair and desk,
He is longing for other lands,
For moon-drenched maidens pale and slim
And islands with coral sands.

A moment's sin in years long past . . .
An unseen mooring holds him fast.

Sea-Born

The meadow stretches far away,
Tall silver tree trunks far and near
Bend neither to the east or west,
No ocean breeze blows here.

Horizon lines are grey and cool,
And snow-bleached grasses dry and sere
Rise up above the sorrel loam,
No ocean breeze blows here.

To one born by a wind-swept coast
This peaceful scene is flat and drear,
He longs for swaying storm-tossed trees,
High-crested waves, and foam-swept weir.

Horizons blue where ships appear
And beacon to an unknown sphere.

Derelict

Is it possible that I
Here in shallow waters lie,
Keeled to starboard on the sand
Far too near to be to land?
Three strong masts are misty white,
Bleached by days of burning light;
Time indeed has done enough,
But I'm made of stronger stuff
Than the other wrecks around,
Skeletons upon the sound.
Nothing but their shriveled bones
Through which tide-rip creeps and moans.
No, my hulk's as strong to-day,
Strong as when the ladies gay
Walked my decks with sailors bold
Telling tales of days of old,
Then my messroom heard a toast,
Earth no finer one could boast.
Yes, it's strange to think that I
Here in shallow waters lie,
I who sailed unfathomed seas
Should be lying here at ease.

Foam Phantom

I lighted a match, but its feeble flame
Went out in a gust of the stormy squall,
So I stepped in the lea of a fishing house
And tried another. I heard a call.

The match lit quickly and brightly burned,
Now where before had I seen that face?
My world around me suddenly crashed.
Who could ever forget such grace?

My heartbeats quickened at what I saw,
She was standing flat against the wall;
Around her face damp copper curls,
Like a bas-relief in a foreign stall.

The matey hurried me into the night;
I scarcely had time to make my ship.
Was it dreamed or real? By the lantern gleam
I saw a filmy kerchief dip.

What has changed me now they cannot tell,
The crew who jostle and wonder and leer;
They little know of a strong man's soul
Filled with sedulous longing and fear.

For at night when on watch I pace the deck
And the pungent, stinging wind blows cool,
As I think of a wharf and a fishing shed
I curse myself for a fool.

East Coast Port

The sailor stood above the quay
And watched the stirring sights below.
Overhead, the sky was blue,
But the sea was pure ultramarine,
Gashed with white choppy waves.
From the ships there came the call
Of orders, the clanging of bells,
The squeak of hawser on mooring post,
And over all the screaming of sea-gulls.
The air, salt and tangy,
Was seasoned with oakum and tar,
An East Coast Port.

The sailor closed his eyes and was again
In fantasy, back in his Western home;
There the sky was luminous with heat,
And waving grain, golden and ripe,
Made a shimmering sea in the sun.
Across the fields came the drone
And hum of tractor and reaper;
On high, a lone hawk swooped toward the land.
The odor of remembered things
Brought a keen nostalgia.

He had longed for the sea and would someday
Be part of its life, but to-day
He was just a lonely sailor
In an East Coast Port.

From the Sea

From one small window I looked out and saw
A square of well-kept lawn, close-cut and neat,
Where sunlit branches swaying in the breeze
Made patterned shades across the narrow street.
Along this narrow street where shade trees grow
I saw four tired grey survivors go.
Their very walk showed they were men of ships,
And on each face there was a look of awe,
As if what they had suffered had not passed
And time alone would dim the things they saw.
The square is empty now, branches still sway,
Was it a dream I dreamed but yesterday?

Premature

No sea-gulls fly in the ice-bound bay.
They feel that Spring is not yet here;
And they follow the sea-craft far away,
Longing daily for harbor and pier.
Had I learned the wisdom of such a bird
As I glimpsed the white expanse of your soul
And not rushed on—your beauty lured,
As I saw in the future the ultimate goal—
Had I waited until the ice was away,
This chilly mist would not rise each day.

Two Nights

In a luminous night a crystal moon
Cast its rays on a silver sea,
They shimmer there like a limpid wing
And beauty entrances me.

But I remember a night of storm
When the clouds rolled black on high;
And the waters below were thick with foam
While my answering voice was a sigh.

Yet the shriek of the storm was the song of my heart,
For my spirit leaped to its call,
As a blinding flame of lightning flashed
I was unified with it all.

For youth rejoices in nature's strife;
In itself it's akin to the beat
Of her stirring passions, noise and stress.
One who does not admit defeat.

On this quiet night I know the peace
Of a calm, enchanting sea . . .
And now I forget both storm and fire.
Where is that other me?

A Christmas Tree

Above the lights of the Navy quay
I saw on a mast a small Christmas tree.
With lights of blue and green and gold
It shone at night o'er the waters cold.
Like a fantasy rare its gay lights glowed
And colored ribbon-reflections flowed;
As it hung aloft with its charm and light,
The star-sprinkled sky made a backdrop of night.

In the windows of homes I've seen many a tree
And happy children who laughed with glee;
But this one tree that the sailors hung
Above the decks while the north wind stung
Will mean that each Christmas night I shall see,
In mem'ry, a small brave Christmas tree.

II OF THE LAND



Unseen Blossoms

Often one sees an orchard blooming bright
With blossoms clustering gaily on its boughs,
Beneath the shade the spotted cattle browse,
All tended well with work and proud delight.

Now on this farm the trees are gnarled and grey,
Alone the ghostly chimney stern and tall
Still stands, and unseen petals softly fall
Where once the children joined to laugh and play.

How sad is this deserted spot. We wait
And deeply think upon the vacant farms
From virgin forests won by stalwart arms.
Small spruce again grow over the estate.

Through endless days of fortitude and skill
These pioneers had worked with faith and pride
And trusting still in that same faith they died.
The thoughts of gallant days inspire us still.

Arbutus

Up the high hill in ecstasy we race,
Then turn around to gaze below its height,
Where flowing brooks and pastures interlace,
Pleasing and cool in early morning light.

Above the mist-enveloped glen
We feel the influence of fairy wands;
Damp smell of wood and odors of the fen,
Bits of soft moss and tiny green curled fronds.

In little valleys snow still lingers on,
And under prickly boughs of rugged spruce
The King of Winter's marks are not yet gone;
The Princess Spring is asking now for truce.

Beside an ancient rotting stump we find
A dainty mystery rousing fresh delight,
The small arbutus blossoms are entwined
With clinging tendrils, hidden from the sight.

It does not even feel the chill of snows,
And often blooms beside a rivulet
Where Springtime's vibrant opalescence flows.
With me its piquant odor lingers yet.

Spring

Small rivulets make crooked paths across streets
Recently covered with soiled snow,
The vapor arising from the sorrel ground
Exudes a steam of musty odors.
Across the way with heavy stooping figure
A foreign woman digs deftly
Into the tenacious loam,
Seeking a few edible roots
So mindful of the savory relish
Of her Homeland.

Mirage

Away in the Southland, Spring came early,
And flowers blossomed overnight;
This should have made my heart beat faster,
As I gazed in awe at the magic sight.
Then I thought of my home in the distant Northland,
And somehow life didn't seem just right.
I curled my fingers to form a spyglass,
And shield my eyes from the noontime glare,
And through this opening I saw in wonder
A fragment of drift-ice, floating there . . .
A clamber of drift-ice, moving slowly . . .
Strange how the memory of childhood clings,
Sapphire colors of Spring in the Northland,
Rainbow lights on a sea-gull's wings.

Springtime

Across the street the neighbor's boy
Is spading the half-frozen ground;
He stops occasionally to pounce
Upon a worm, wiggling and round;
He holds it high exultantly,
Then drops it in a small glass jar,
And looking toward the soft blue hills,
He sees the fishing brook afar.

As twilight comes and shadows fall
Across the yard and vacant lot,
The boy still digs with easy grace,
And sees in his mind's eye a spot
Where early sunlight tipped with gold
Flickers across a shaded stream;
Feels not the weight of heavy sod,
But one large trout bending his rod.

Summer Clouds

The boy gazed at the changing summer clouds,
Their form and fantasy like something dreamed;
One moment in a snow-capped mount they'd rise
With silver trees and icy steeps; he seemed
To feel the Arctic winds from that vast space
And wondered at the sun upon his face.

But, gazing still, he found the scene had changed;
An Oriental land, a narrow street
With domes and spires, a sky line yet unknown,
Was pictured there as by some magic feat;
The sound of the silver bells floated on high
And strangely mingled with the robin's cry.

Then suddenly the sky was clearer blue
And on its azure sea a barquentine,
With white sails curving to the breeze, swept down,
To carry him afar to lands unseen;
The sailors' voices rang out loud and clear
In foreign tongue which only he could hear.

He rubbed his eyes, jumped to his feet, and then
Began to weed the long straight row again.

Trout Pool

Below a pastel-tinted sky
The trout brook flowed
Slowly over white pebbles.
Farther upstream deeper pools beckoned
Azure and cool.
Steep mountain-sides patterned
In brilliant maple and blue spruce
Resembled a rich tapestry.
The silence was broken only by the plunge
Of a heavy fish, the humming swirl of a line
Or the sharp staccato of bird calls.

Seasons

Trees of brown and red and yellow
Flaunt their beauty beneath the skies,
Verdure far on distant hillsides
The thoughts of Autumn belies.

One vivid splurge on a maple sapling
Flashes vermilion surprisingly bright,
Small but refulgent in sunset splendor
It bursts upon our sight.

To some heart that is crushed with loss and fear
Autumn has come though Summer is here.

Unto the Hills

Through hazy morning mist the hills appear
With promise of their grandeur and their strength,
As though 'twas they who pushed the fog away
Into the radiance of another day.
At midday the translucent sky above
Seemed like a painted scene, until at length
White soft-spun clouds amassing high and deep
Threw woodcut shadows down the mountain steep.
And stronger still the giant hills stand forth
When sunset's ruby glow alights the sky,
In silhouette their greatness reappears
As dark against the gold birds homeward fly.

Resignation

The old tree was to be cut down;
for years it had stood among its green neighbors
conspicuous by its lack of verdure,
with hoary moss on grey flanks, and
thin scrawny arms swaying in the breeze.

The smoke from the Autumn fire in the clearing
passes in blue clouds over the low hills,
as the old tree without sadness awaits its turn
to kindle the hungry flames,
knowing that its ashes will remain
a part of the land, and give
new life to others.

Fall Ploughing

The men who plough in Springtime see
Small growing things 'ere long,
But men who plough in Autumntime
Must have great faith and strong.

The fields of long brown rows of sod
Are flanked by second grass;
And the wild geese that southward fly
Honk dully as they pass.

Men urge their tired beasts along,
With confidence elate;
Under a grey and stormy sky
Light fades, they cannot wait.

For they must look away beyond
The high white hills forlorn,
And through Frost's icy fingers see
Another Spring reborn.

Dawn

In the Autumn dawn the city streets
Are empty and quiet and bare,
While across the way in the high stone pile,
Lights come on here and there.
The sky is soft with the crimson glow
That one sees only at dawn;
And below the streetlights are turned off,
But the traffic lights shine on,
Making two glowing color spots
Like jewels of ruby and jade;
Then traffic starts and very soon
The jewel colors fade.
Trucks pass in haste, a loud horn blares,
Brakes grind as the lights turn red;
Workmen with lunch cans rush along
To the busy day ahead.
Then the roseate sky is turned to grey,
Man again takes up his duty,
But I will remember throughout the day
Dawn's precious vase of beauty.

There Is a Beauty

There is a beauty only Winter brings.
The hills of early morning, pure and white;
Silver-peaked roofs and fences topped with snow,
A new gay canvas painted overnight.

A high church spire becomes a magic tower
When viewed in sunshine, jewel-bedecked and bright.
While from low eaves clear icicles hang down
With all the beauty of a stalactite.

The branches of the trees are trimmed with tulle;
The brook is now a shining moire band
Fit to be worn on any bridal gown,
With swirls and patterns never made by hand.

There is a beauty only Winter brings . . .
Across the snow the pale mauve shadows pass,
And the blue crystal of the oval creek
Becomes a large encrusted looking-glass.

The sky is tinged with rose; birds as they fly
Are etched in inky black against the sky.

III

OTHER POEMS



Unrest

The sheltered farm had always been her home
Yet in her dwelt no liking for the loam.
A visionary child, it always seemed,
Her real world, the fantasy she dreamed.
When, climbing long green hills she found the sea,
Came seething urge and longing to be free;
The courtships of village lovers left her cold.
Could life go on like this till she was old,
And would she always long and hope in vain?
Within her blood there ran an alien strain.

Blind Pig

Every day he sits
Outdoors with his chair tipped back,
The same old derby
And cane; his small eyes blink,
Guarding a pig that is blind.

A Visit

The house had once been painted green with trimmings white,
But rain and storm of many years had changed the sight.
And now it stood forlorn and grey upon the hill,
Uncurtained windows looking out, forboding ill.
The picket fence had many palings torn away
And grinned with wild demonic leer through weeds and hay.
We knocked upon the blistered door in darkening gloom,
And quick sharp footsteps echoed through the empty room;
Serene and dressed in silk, we saw her standing near,
The rustling poplars gave a sudden chill of fear;
We spoke and through unanswered eerie silence knew
And quickly took the narrow path all wet with dew.
Once there, our hurried feet like frightened swallows flew.

Beauty Shoppe

All day she toiled
Making beautiful the faces
Of other women,
Yet she herself was not beautiful.
Women of society demanded her services,
Knowing that with skilful fingers
She would smooth from faces the lines
Written there by trivial annoyances
And too much pursuing of pleasure's gods.
It was not a lasting beauty
Yet it served for the time,
And they could return to her again . . .
Women being made beautiful,
Day after day,
By one who was beautiful
Only in spirit.

The Mother

*(Poem written after reading The Mother
by Pearl S. Buck)*

The fields of rice in which she slaved
Were not unkind to her,
Her rhythmic body swayed with ease,
Her mind was all astir.

Soon she would know again the touch
Of clinging baby hands;
Her time could not be far off now—
She looked across the land.

There, undisturbed, her husband lay,
Content to watch her toil;
He never followed out the day,
It was she who tilled the soil.

From him it was she had her joy,
And pride had lit her face;
So, kindled with thoughts like these, she seemed
United with all her race.

Three Rocking Chairs

From a low branch of a willow tree
A newly painted sign was hung.
The old farmhouse back of the willows
Looked on with troubled eyes at this outrage,
With its gaudy printing,
"Furniture and Antiques for Sale."
Out of doors on the stoop,
Three empty rocking chairs
Swayed lightly in the gentle breeze.
How easily one could picture three women
Rocking and chatting together.
Now and then the chairs ceased rocking
As though some bit of gossip
Had been discussed.
From an upstairs window in the ell
Two unstarched curtains hung limp and pathetic.
No smoke came from the wide chimney;
A lone crow stalked around the yard
Then stood by the well, awkwardly plucking
At a frayed strand of rope.
Across the bay the sunset gilded the scene,
And illuminated the small gable windows.
The wind ceased, the sea was calm,
But on the stoop
Three chairs still rocked.

Fragments

In her youth she must have been beautiful,
This woman who works by the day;
For even now after many years
Her figure is graceful as she goes about her tasks;
And her eyes, though dimmed, hold memories and dreams.
Dreams . . . the dreams have been shattered,
Redreamed and shattered again,
But she still tries to piece the fragments together,
Though life tells her this is useless.

Screen Doors

We sat and talked; the shadows grew more tall
And golden sunlight blended over all.
We spoke of crops that failed, of horses, men.
He said, "I started work when I was ten.
I peddled cottage cheese from door to door.
The youngest of us six, and we were poor."

His blue eyes looked beyond the fall-ploughed loam,
Where on the sunlit hill he saw his home;
He filled his pipe, lighted a match and stood,
The whole six feet of him were staunch and good.
"It matters not," he said, "how much I've seen;
I learned of human nature through the screen."

The Timepiece

There was a time when watches were a joy
To little boys who climbed their uncle's knee,
And listened to a solemn tock-tick-tock,
And held in childish hands a mystery.

You pulled a watch from out its pocket nest,
Which always seemed too small to hold its prize,
A magic spring was touched, the case popped wide,
And you beheld the dial with wondering eyes.

The watch was fastened to a heavy chain,
With golden links, it hung across his vest,
And once you found the way the crossbar worked,
Your uncle then had neither peace nor rest.

And there were charms, a horseshoe, a stag's tooth,
High on a blue serge knee, you saw them all,
Or on a rough tweed knee that scratched your skin
Where short pants stopped, you squirmed but did not fall.
How dull the modern watch today appears
Contrasted with the timepiece of those years.

Lunchboxes

Lunchboxes must be filled

In golden-shaded afternoons in Spring,
when children laugh and play across the square,
the mothers are at home, and with a skill
that comes from years of patient toil and care,
they quickly make up lunches for their men.

Nearing midnight, with half the world asleep,
when strange night noises pass along
the narrow street; before the whistle blows,
to break the quiet with voice blatant and strong,
tired women give to this small task their best.

At early dawn before the sky is settled
and soft new eager morning sounds are heard;
the clop-clop of the milkman's ancient horse,
the gentle flutelike notes of some small bird,
the women of the house are busy then.
Lunchboxes must be filled.

And deep down in the mine, or by the light
of molten slag, men eat and are content.

Hot Stove Controversy

I raised the latch, entered the loose-hung door
And found myself within the country store.

A silence fell, but words still hung in air;
I knew there would be talk, were I not there;
Around the stove a group of seated men,
With pipes well lit, waited to talk again.

Leaning against the counter others stood
Like awkward figures carved from native wood.
The old stove cast across the store a gleam,
Its glowing sides seemed bulged to burst a seam.

I found a keg and sat down near the door,
It almost seemed I had been there before;
One farmer eyed me up and down, then spoke,
He seemed content and so the silence broke.

Another, sensing he was not alone,
Began to speak in slow-spaced monotone;
And all their talk was good with well-turned speech,
The firelight showed the earnest face of each

I've been in offices above the street,
With plate-glass doors, where well-known magnates meet;
There they discussed the times, the day's events,
And even added much of common sense.

But if I had the chance, I would slip down
Into the main street of that little town,
To hear again the hot stove argument,
And feel myself both honored and content.

Blacksmith Shop

The younger generation do not know
The charm and pleasure of a blacksmith shop:
With low-hung roof, grey and devoid of paint,
And small-paned windows streaked with smoke and dust.

Outside, the ground was worn as hard as flint
From restless pawing of a hundred hoofs;
Within, a certain acrid smell arose,
A mixture of cold cinders and new steam,
As much a part of the whole place as was
The wide-built chimney or the smith himself.

In semidarkness we could see the flame
Of burning coals poked and raked back and forth
And blown red by the teen-age boy, who leaned
His elbows on the blackened well-worn stick,
And pumped the bellows slowly up and down;
A superman he really seemed to us,
Who never spoke or looked our way at all.

The strong-armed smithy with his iron tongs
Skilfully pulled from out the glowing fire
The rough embryonic making of a shoe,
And with a grace born of long years of toil
Placed it upon the shining anvil's top:
There in a shower of golden sparks he made
Something of which a man could well be proud;
As it was plunged into the water tub
We waited for the pleasant hissing sound.

O blacksmith shop. O callow envied boy,
Children to-day have never known our joy.

Men Fishing

I have seen men fishing.
In the cool shade of the blue-shadowed hills
The water flowed over white pebbles,
And the amber pools were hiding places for opal beauties.
The swish of a line, the gay trill of a bird on a sun-patterned tree,
Or the splash of a wary fish upstream were the only sounds.
I have seen men fishing for pleasure.

I have seen men fishing.
Off the Grand Banks, in the fog and cold
Men in dories, men hardy and strong, hauled in white-bellied cod.
The yellow boats rocked and rolled in the ocean swell,
But work went steadfastly on.
As the fog lifted other craft came in sight,
Heavy-laden with their silver prey managed deftly with
 rough hands.
While the rank air of the sea enveloped all.
I have seen men fishing for pay.

I have seen men fishing.
A grey line in a human queue passed down to the wharves;
Each shabbily dressed man carried a small can of bait,
All walked slowly.
Sitting on the edge of a coal-blackened quay they fished for hours.
Sometimes a small fish was caught and pulled up
Where it flopped ungracefully over the rough boards.
No word was spoken, and sullen eyes were seldom lifted to
 the cold chimneys across the bay.
The mills were closed.
I have seen men fishing for food.

Soot

It was true, the plant was closed . . .
Smoke belched no more from the tall straight stacks,
It seemed impossible to get away from the sight
Of their cold reminder of want.
Relief—with always someone hungry till the soul
As well as the body grew shriveled and hopeless.
A man could not stay in the house.
A woman, remembering her anger at smoke-smeared clothes,
Now prayed for a smudge of soot.

Lumber Shed

The chill wind blew across the jutting quay,
And by the flickering lights hung overhead
(Men turning night to day to earn their bread)
One saw the outline of a lumber shed.
Here workmen passed with heavy-footed step,
Nor paused to think how long the shift might be.
Some walked more slowly than the others, who
Less late had known the hungry belly's plea.

Tightening his coat around him with a cord,
For cruel winds cut like a tempered sword,
A youth, too slim for the frayed suit he wore,
Staggered and faltered with the load he bore.

Upon the shed, as low-burned lanterns flared,
The stark grim shadow of a cross appeared.

Coal Miners

Out of the bowels of earth they come,
Blackened and smoky and grim,
Climbing the slope for the shift is done;
They stand erect on the rim.

Strong and husky their muscles show
Under the coating of black;
And they stretch their arms and blink in the sun
And wonder if tallies are slack.

With lights that glitter on shabby caps,
They go their way without talk;
Their heavy pit-boots caked with clay
Give a thudding sound to their walk.

They walk, and think as they thud along
Of days that are turned into night,
These men who slave in endless gloom
To give us light.

Straight Stick

In the Spring through the forest her walk was quick
As she searched here and there for a straight-grown stick;
When in Summer the forest lay hot in the sun
She still labored on for her task was not done;
For perfection is always hard to find,
Yet the thought of its promise obsessed all her mind.
Now she stands, while the winds of Autumn moan,
With regret as her guest in a field unsown.

Rapier Blades

Years ago and oftentimes forgotten
Was the message sent into the night.
The paper crackled as it was thrust furtively
Into its heavy parchment envelope.
Cold sweat was on your brow
Though the room was hot;
The odor of the wax came to your nostrils
As you sealed it,
Having signed away your honor.
All this returns with harsh, vivid detail
As someone closes a missive with a purple seal.
Memories roused by odors are keen
As rapier blades.

The Past

The sun threw burning streaks of light
On the stately copper samovar.
Days of Russian glory
Dreamed in a second-hand store.

Her First Visit

I should remember better . . .
Streets and high buildings
Filled with a million sounds
And the stress of life.

But most clearly I recall
My grandmother,
Knitting rapidly bright-colored yarn
Or hulling large strawberries
With my aid.
And I can remember walking,
Clinging tightly to giant fingers;
Our steps made a sharp noise
On the pavement, as we hurried along
For ice cream.

In Campobello

(Campobello was the New Brunswick summer home of President Roosevelt)

In far-off Campobello
The streets are quiet today,
The country stores are shuttered tight,
The children stop in play
To ask if it is Sunday,
Because it is so still;
And Sunday sounds of farm and sea
Echo across the hill.

In far-off Campobello
The old men talk to-day,
Of years gone by when they were young
And life was free and gay;
And some of them remember
A lad who called them friend,
Who, though he took the path to fame,
Remembered to the end.

In far-off Campobello
Tomorrow bells will toll
For one who in the highest place
Revered the human soul.
And all will gather in the church
With sadness and with pride
Because among them greatness walked
Their streets, at eventide.

April 14, 1945

Time

I have come back, why did I dream
That life could be the same?
I walk the old familiar streets
And someone calls my name.

Around me others move about
Like actors on the screen,
While I, the audience, look on
A too familiar scene.

This is no way to blot out things
A man should never see,
With row on row of empty days
In slow monotony.

I have come back, you are too kind,
Yes, much too kind to me,
But only time can bring again
The peace that used to be.

City of Yore

From these same cliffs, in days long past and gone,
Brave men of valor stood and looked upon
Such grandeur here as seldom meets the eye;
Gazed, were enthralled, lifted their prayers on high,
Swore they would build at once a city fair
Upon the rock nature had fashioned there.
City of Yore, you rise in all your pride
Above the great St. Lawrence, deep and wide.
Once stately cavaliers and ladies gay
Strolled on the Dufferin Terrace, where to-day
Young lovers walk each eve when work is o'er
And often they must speak of days of yore.
Melodious chimes, dulcet, full-toned and clear,
Ring out from the Basilica for all to hear.
Glorious Quebec, you thrill our hearts once more
Seeing in the mind's eye, City of Yore.

Wild Roses

Beside the country lane wild roses grow;
Each year it looks the same, how well I know,
For I walk down this road when work is done,
And often in the golden setting sun
I see you stand beside the hedge again,
And all the joy returns, and all the pain.

The salt sea breeze mingles with hay and clover,
Gulls whirl and cry; the summer's almost over.
Wild rose, with thorns your beauty can't conceal,
Waken afresh the anguish that I feel.
The tide goes out, the barren rocks look grey,
Sea-gulls fly by and only memories stay.

Fête Day

On other days in nature's bloom and grace
I see the semblance of your comely face.

Beyond the bay the sun's rich golden rays
Bring back the thought of other sacred days,
And in the colored maze of Autumn's flame
Down through the shaded slopes I trace your name.

To-day, perhaps because it was your fête,
I know I saw you standing by the gate
And knew once more the brightness of your smile,
Remembered radiance stayed with me awhile.

Now down the path when Winter comes I know
This newborn faith will never let you go.

Imagery

You saw
Across the room,
I was one of the guests;
The others faded and we stood
Alone.

Firesides

My fireside is without charm tonight
For long ago you vanished from my sight;
But many recollections hide away
Where flickering lights and smoky shadows play.
I think of all the plans we made alone;
Around the eaves the wind sounds like a moan.
As now I sit, I watch the glowing flame
And in the ember's red I see one name;
Grotesque and tiny forms march to and fro—
Dear heart of mine, return; I love you so.
Come before coals have died to ashy grey
And scattered far away.

Wild Geese

(Song)

Wild geese flying together,
Flying to lands afar.
But we have parted, my love and I,
I know not where you are;
Under the spell of Summer's charm
I thought that you were mine,
Unseen magic 'round us both
Wove a charm sublime.
When the wild birds in Spring return
Shall I find the answer for which I yearn?

Wild geese flying together,
Flying to lands unknown.
Dreaming and waiting night and day,
Longing for you alone.
High overhead they pass
Flying to fairer skies.
Is it, I wonder, for me alone that memory never dies?
When the wild birds in Spring return
Shall I find the answer for which I yearn?

Exile

The hot dry wind comes over the plain,
And its arid taste on my tongue
Brings neither the rest nor peace I need.
It's not long since I was young.

But far in the night when at last I sleep
I see in my dreams a wave,
With its height and coolness it succors me—
I have still a soul to save.

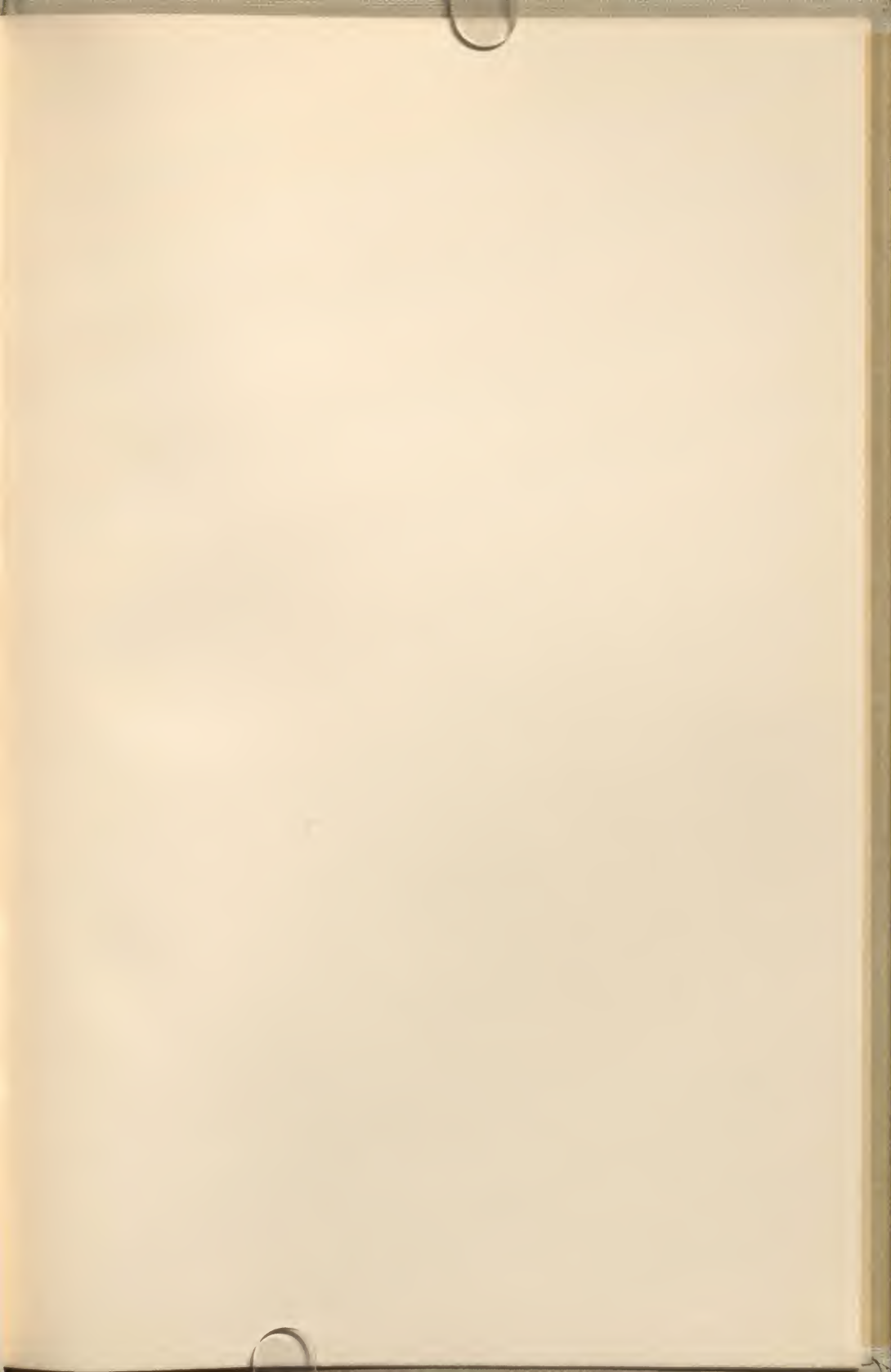
Then morning comes and another day
With its same Gethsemane
How long can I live for the night alone
Until death shall set me free?

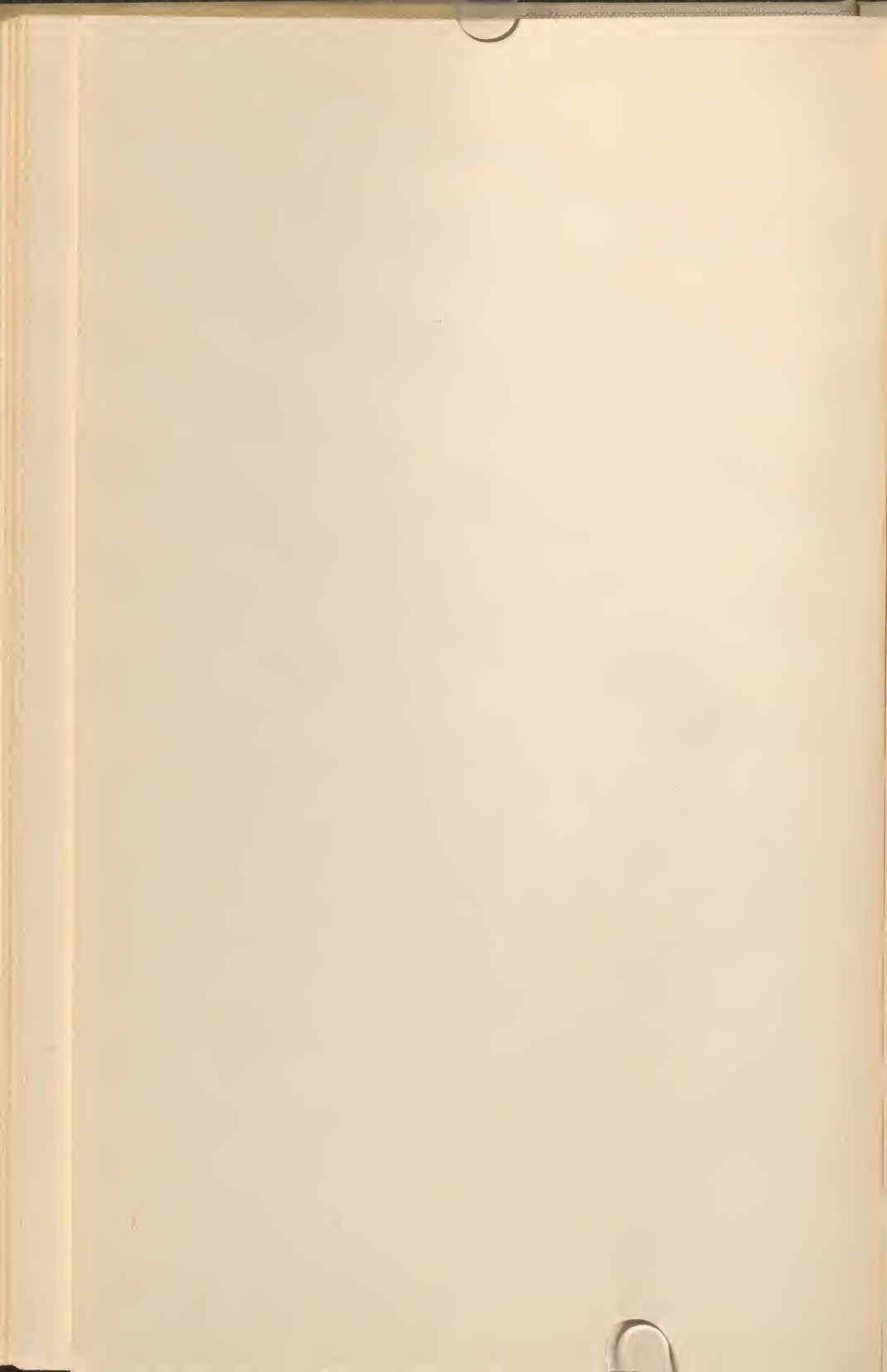
Two Masters

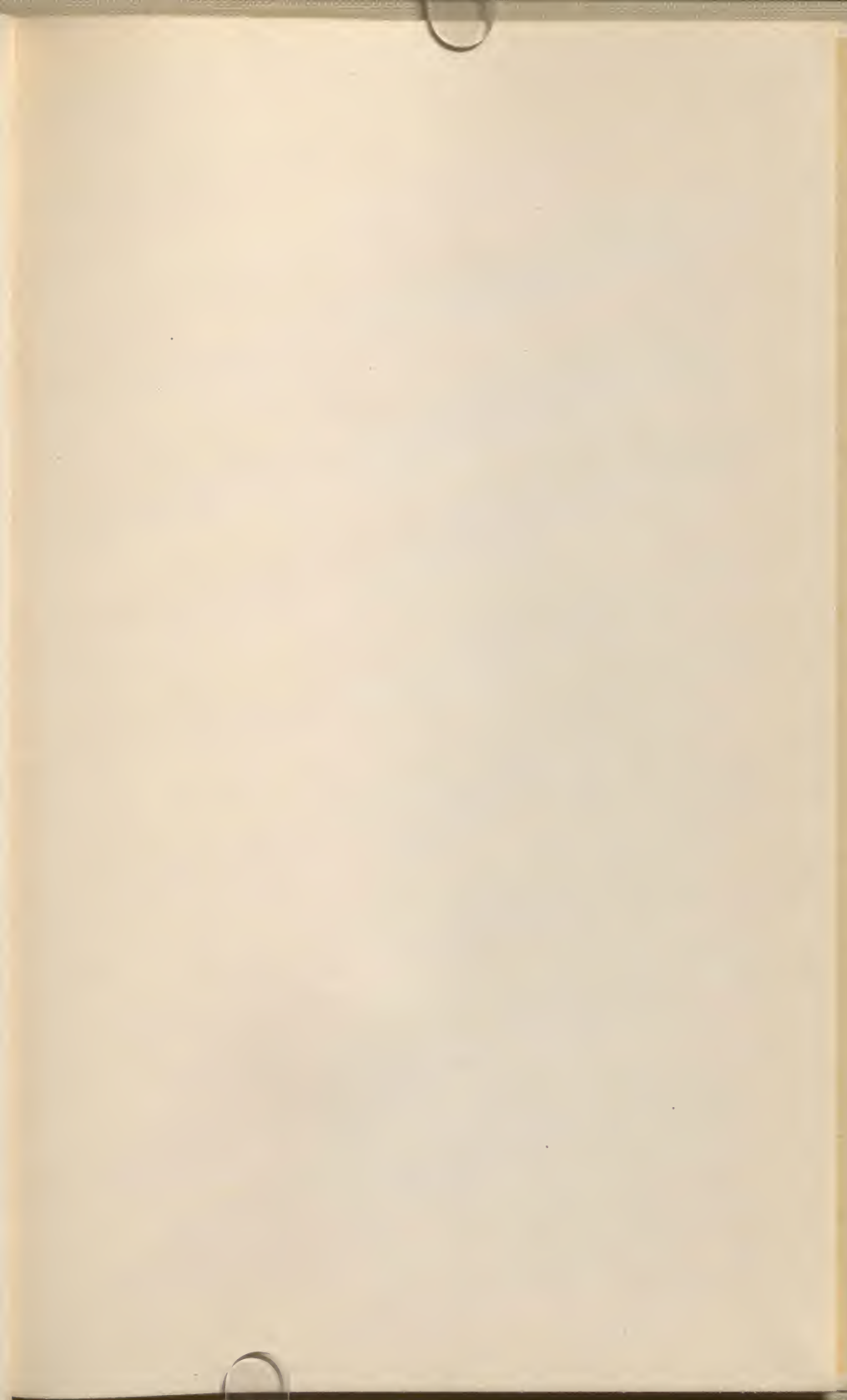
I saw in a case
Two crosses of ebony;
Small things made by hand
And tipped with chaste gold.
Nearby lay two dice.
God and Mammon.

Lent

Now penitent, with hearts that break,
We ask forgiveness for our sins;
Those petty sins that often make
A sadder life for others than
The greater wrongs disproved by men.
In Thy great mercy guide our ways,
Strengthened again by Forty Days.









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